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UNDP: PROGRAMME OF ASSISTANCE TO THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE

Report of the Administrator

I. PURPOSE

1. The present report contains an account of the activities of the Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People during 1994, including its financial situation, programme delivery and strategy, operational highlights and the coordinating role played by UNDP.

II. OVERALL SITUATION

2. The Programme more than doubled its operations in 1994, directing its activities mainly at strengthening new Palestinian institutions and creating employment opportunities. In close cooperation with the United Nations Special Coordinator in the Occupied Territories, steps have also been taken to promote private and public investment in the area, including a base for improved trade and export.

III. FINANCIAL SITUATION

3. The fifth cycle allocation from Special Programme Resources (SPR), which constitute the core resources of the Programme, amounts to $10.5 million. Non-core resources for the period under review, furnished in various forms, including trust fund arrangements, cost-sharing, and management service agreements, were provided by: Germany ($0.2 million); Italy ($9.8 million); Japan ($29.7 million); Norway ($7 million); United States ($9.1 million); the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) ($1.5 million); and the United Nations Development Fund for Women ($72,000).

IV. PROGRAMME DELIVERY AND STRATEGY

4. Following the signing of the Peace Agreement between the Palestine Liberation Organization and Israel in Cairo in May 1994, which established Palestinian self-rule in the Gaza Strip and Jericho, the Programme placed high priority on the provision of start-up support to the Palestine National Authority and its various sectoral departments and supporting institutions. On a visit to the area in September 1994, the Administrator met with senior officials of the Authority and of the Government of Israel. He also represented the Secretary-General at the Middle East-North Africa Economic Summit in Casablanca, held on 30 October to 1 November 1994.

5. The Programme strategy in 1994, formulated in full collaboration with the Palestinian Authority, focused on four broad objectives: the protection and management of the environment; the encouragement of sustainable human development; the support of economic development; and the strengthening of public administration.

V. OPERATIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

6. In 1994, assistance was provided to the Palestinian Economic Council for Development and Reconstruction and six Authorities (Finance, Economy, Trade and Industry, Labour and Vocational Training, Local Government and Municipalities, Tourism and Culture).

7. Assistance was also provided to the Civil Defense Department, especially in the Gaza Strip, the Border Control Unit (responsible for joint control with Israel of the international border), the Palestinian Information and International Relations Centre, the Palestinian Economic Research Centre and the National Computer Centre in Gaza City.

8. A number of projects include support for the establishment of computerized information systems. The latter will be linked to a national computer network within the National Computer Centre that will eventually include all major governmental entities. UNDP has also provided start-up funds to enable three Palestinian universities to establish an inter-university computer network linked to INTERNET through UNDP. This network will be progressively extended to the remaining six Palestinian universities, as well as to other public and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) throughout the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

9. Two emergency projects addressed the grave unemployment situation in the Gaza Strip, estimated at more than 50 per cent of the labour force, as well as the urgent needs for the rehabilitation of basic infrastructure: the Gaza Clean-Up project, funded by Japan; and the Neighbourhood Transformation Project, funded by Norway. In 1994, these projects generated work for more than 4,000 people in Gaza, with wages estimated at $3.5 million. These programmes will be followed by a much larger project formulated by UNDP for 1995.

10. The Programme continued its support for education in 1994. During the year, 54 new classrooms were constructed for girls in remote rural areas, accommodating 2,000 additional students, bringing the total of classrooms built

by UNDP to 223, for nearly 9,000 students. Work was also begun on the renovation of the only two agricultural training centres, one in the West Bank and one in the Gaza Strip.

11. Implementation of the programme for the promotion of women in Palestinian society accelerated significantly in 1994. A "Directory of Palestinian Professional Women", listing 2,420 women working in various professional fields was published by UNDP. A study of the legal system as it affects women and impacts on their rights was also carried out. About 10 workshops were held to discuss issues of concern to women and formulate action strategies. These activities have laid the groundwork for a follow-up project formulated by UNDP and approved in December 1994. Finally, following a Norwegian-UNDP mission, the report At the Crossroads: Challenges and Choices for Palestinian Women in the West Bank and Gaza Strip was published and presented at the Arab Regional Conference held in Amman, Jordan in November 1994 in preparation for the Fourth World Conference on Women to be held in Beijing. This report has been adopted as a framework policy and is being translated into Arabic for wider distribution.

12. In the water supply sector, work was completed on the Ramallah water well, Phase I of the Tulkarem water supply system, and several village water systems, and is almost completed on the Nablus Old City water distribution system. A new project was launched in Khan Younis and design work started on Phase II of the Tulkarem system. Expansion of the Northern Gaza sewerage network continued during the year. Together, these projects will benefit approximately 400,000 people throughout the West Bank and Gaza Strip. In addition, detailed proposals have been drawn up for the rehabilitation of the water supply and irrigation system of Jericho City, which serves more than 12,000 people, and for an improved irrigation system for an additional 3,000 farmers in an adjacent village.

13. The Integrated Rural Development Project, launched jointly by UNDP and UNCDF at the end of 1993 has made impressive progress. A seven-kilometre road has been completed, opening up the region and linking farmers to major markets of the area. Work has started on the construction of 12 earth roads of about 30 kilometres total length to improve farmers' access to about 5,000 acres of agricultural land. These results have been achieved with active participation by the local communities in accordance with the Programme's participatory methodology. In preparation for the extension of the Programme to other areas, a comprehensive physical planning study in the Jenin and Hebron Districts of the West Bank has been completed.

14. An important milestone in the Programme was achieved in November 1994, when the citrus processing plant, jointly financed by the Government of Italy and UNDP at a cost of $12 million was officially handed over to the Palestinian National Authority.

VI. UNDP ROLE IN COORDINATION

15. In June 1994, a Special Coordinator in the Occupied Territories was appointed by the Secretary-General to facilitate coordination among the respective United Nations programmes and agencies operating in the Occupied Territories. In this respect, UNDP continues to play a major role in putting its experience at the disposal of the Coordinator. Meanwhile, throughout 1994, UNDP provided significant logistical and advisory support to numerous missions of various United Nations agencies (the International Labour Organization (ILO), the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (UNCHS) (Habitat), the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)), to the World Bank, and to other international organizations and national NGOs. The joint project between UNDP, UNICEF and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), implemented in 1994 to improve and expand community centres for children and youth, has been successfully completed.

16. Following the experience of previous years, UNDP expanded its initiative towards greater information exchange and cooperation between bilateral and multilateral donors. The third Compendium of Ongoing Technical Assistance Projects in the Occupied Palestinian Territories was published by UNDP in August 1994, and a report on Programme projects, Building Capacity in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip was published in September 1994. Both of these documents were widely circulated.

VII. EXECUTIVE BOARD ACTION

17. The Executive Board may therefore wish to:

1. Take note of the present report; and

2. Encourage the international donor community to increase contributions to the Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People and to take full advantage of its unique and effective delivery capacity.